

Caregiver's Role - Child's Role

Responsive feeding is like a dance between caregiver and child. Each cue from the child requires a response from the caregiver that sends a message back to the child.

Age	Caregiver Prepares	Child Skills & Signals	Caregiver Responds	Child Learns
Birth to 6 months	Prepare to offer food when infant signals hunger	Signal hunger/fullness through voice, facial expression, and actions	Responds to infant's signals: Offers food when hungry, stops when full Holds infant, makes eye contact, talks softly Practices paced bottle feeding, allowing the baby to drink, then rest, drink, then rest	Caregiver will respond and meet her needs Feeding is a comfortable, rewarding and bonding experience
6-12 months	Ensure child is safely and appropriately positioned, upright in an infant seat Gradually establish mealtime routines	Sits Chews and swallows semisolid foods (purees, ground soft foods, or tiny soft chunks) Self-feed with fingers	Responds to child's signals Increases variety, texture, and tastes Holds infant and talks softly while bottle feeding Responds positively to child's attempts to self-feed Smiles and speaks warmly as child feeds Verbally reinforces the cues child is showing ("Are you hungry?" "Is your tummy full?")	To begin to self-feed To experience new tastes and textures Eating and mealtimes are fun That he can make choices during the feeding process What her body feels like when she is hungry or full That he should listen to his body's cues, and his hunger and fullness cues will be respected by caregiver
12-24 months	Offer 3-4 healthy choices at each meal Offer 2-3 healthy snacks each day Offer foods that can be picked up, chewed, and swallowed Offer meals and snacks at predictable times throughout the day	Self-feeds many different foods Uses baby-safe utensils Uses words to signal requests	Responds to child's signals of hunger and fullness Responds positively to child's attempts to self-feed Sits with child and engages in conversation building vocabulary and social and cognitive skills Models eating and enjoying healthy food Verbally reinforces the cues child is showing ("Are you hungry?" "Is your tummy full?")	To try new foods To do things for herself To ask for help To trust that the caregiver will respond to her requests What her body feels like when she is hungry or full That he should listen to his body's cues

Just as in dancing, the better you learn your partner's (or the child's) cues, the more you both enjoy the dancing experience. But, expect it to be messy!

Adapted from JN The Journal of Nutrition (March 2011) *Example of the progress of feeding behavior and responsivity for young children and caregivers*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3040905/table/tbl1/>